

Project# 316426--BG Trail
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PHASE ONE

FINAL REPORT

BURKE GILMAN TRAIL
CITIZENS ADVISORY GROUP

ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS
RELATED TO
BURKE GILMAN TRAIL REDEVELOPMENT

FEBRUARY 17, 2006

**BURKE GILMAN TRAIL REDEVELOPMENT
CITIZENS ADVISORY GROUP ROSTER**

Trailside homeowners:

Tim Ahern
Tom French
Dean Peterson
Stuart Strand

Cyclists:

Gary Elmer
Mark Withers

Business representative:

Jeff Weissman

Community members at large:

Kate Comtois
Jon Skamser
Sandy Koppenol

Other trail users:

Alison Starling
Mark Gibbons

Lake Forest Park Parks and Recreation Commission:

Michelle LeMoine

Ex-officio, non-voting Lake Forest Park City Council Member:

Ed Sterner

INTRODUCTION

King County Executive Ron Sims and Lake Forest Park Mayor Dave Hutchinson jointly appointed the Burke Gilman Trail Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) in 2004. The mission of the advisory group is to “provide King County with thoughtful and informed recommendations on issues related to the proposed redevelopment of the Burke-Gilman Trail through Lake Forest Park.” The first meeting of the group was convened in November 2004, and the group met an additional five times in 2005.

The primary focus of the group’s work in 2005 was on a Trail Redevelopment Study led by the landscape architect firm of Atelier. This study evaluates two miles of the Burke Gilman Trail from 145th Street to Log Boom Park, and includes recommendations for how the trail can be redesigned and rebuilt to provide for the safety of all users, as well as adjoining homeowners. The CAG was engaged in every aspect of background and analysis related to the proposed trail design, reviewing reports from environmental, geotechnical, drainage, transportation, and arboreal experts. Over the course of their 2005 meetings, the CAG learned a great deal about these various aspects of trail design, and, in turn, were able to share their perspectives on both trail usage and community impacts with the design team.

The Citizens Advisory Group is composed of thirteen members. Four of these are trailside homeowners, two represent trail cyclists, two represent other trail users, one is a business representative, one represents parks and recreation interests, and three are community members at large from Lake Forest Park. One member, an elected official on the Lake Forest Park City Council, serves in an ex-officio, non-voting capacity. The roster of CAG members is listed on the inside front cover of this report.

This report encompasses the first phase of the group’s work, which is to comment and make recommendations on the Atelier Study. The group will continue to serve in an advisory capacity, however, with the second phase of its work being initiated in spring 2006. The group will continue to meet to provide advice and recommendations on trail design, an effort being led by the landscape architect firm of MacLeod Reckord. The trail design process, which will take place throughout 2006-2007, will include preliminary and final trail design, permitting, and construction documents. Construction of trail improvements will commence in mid-2007.

In addition to the ongoing participation of the Citizens Advisory Group, the project will include a public involvement program intended to engage the opinions and feedback of trailside homeowners, trail users, and the general public. Website access, newsletters, and updates will also be included as part of the public involvement program.

As will be noted throughout this report, there are a number of recommendations in the Trail Redevelopment Study that a strong majority of the CAG agrees with. In other areas of the Study, the group has expressed more divided opinions, or, more importantly, has expressed the desire to explore additional options with the MacLeod Reckord team. The

upcoming design process allows for this flexibility. While the Trail Redevelopment Study is an important “first step” in making trail improvements, it is a very preliminary look at how those improvements might be made. It is over the course of 2006 that detailed, final design decisions will be made. The continued involvement of the CAG, in combination with a broader public outreach and public involvement program, will help to ensure that these final decisions are made only after a full range of interests, opinions, and options have been shared and analyzed between the community, the design team, and King County staff.

OVERARCHING THEME

In framing its response to the Trail Redevelopment Study, the Citizens Advisory Group crafted the following theme:

The Citizens Advisory Group recognizes that the safety of this two-mile stretch of the Burke Gilman Trail could be improved from the perspective of both trail users and adjacent property owners. The Group agrees that improvements are necessary to both enhance safety and to make the trail experience more enjoyable for everyone. The Group is committed to continuing to work with the design team to ensure that the improvements made through redevelopment are rationally designed, and that they attempt to address the needs and concerns of all trail users and adjacent property owners.

Areas of Majority Agreement

A strong majority of eleven Citizens Advisory Group members agree with the following elements of the Trail Redevelopment Study. One member, Dean Peterson, has expressed his disagreement with the following elements, and has asked to be delineated as a minority opinion in this report. Another member, Tom French, was out of town as this report was being finalized and was unable to indicate his preference to either agree, or disagree with, the eleven-member majority.

- Eleven members of the CAG agree on the design speeds that Atelier used to set the sight triangles in the study.
- Eleven out of the thirteen CAG members agree that all existing chicanes should be removed. All other impediments that contribute to unsafe conditions for cyclists, such as electrical boxes, sewer manholes, and other structures, should also be removed or relocated, provided this can be done within reasonable cost parameters.
- The eleven-member majority agrees that drainage must be improved along the trail, and the group generally agrees, as well, with the specific drainage improvements that have been suggested. Moreover, the CAG recognizes that many issues related to safety are closely linked to improved drainage. Slides are a severe safety hazard to all users of the trail as well as trailside homeowners. Redesign of the trail should incorporate both improved drainage *and* methods that will improve the ability of King County to maintain the trail drainage systems.

The group further recognizes, however, that adjustments to these drainage improvements cannot be made *at any cost*. While impacts to trailside property owners will be minimized as much as possible, the Burke Gilman Trail is an amenity for a broad diversity of regional users. Any accommodations made for specific property owners must fit within reasonable cost parameters.

- Eleven members agree that overhead lighting and striping should be installed at all intersections and driveways. Lighting that is aimed straight down is best for cyclists. Homeowners who live in close proximity to the intersections will undoubtedly want to be involved in the selection and design of new lighting.
- Eleven out of the thirteen members agree that all of the Atelier recommendations related to removal and replanting of vegetation, as well as the recommendations related to new fencing/screening, should be incorporated into the final design.
- An eleven-member majority agrees that the two driveways north of 153rd Street should be consolidated, and improvements in that area made in accordance with the report.
- The recommendations for signage are supported by eleven out of the thirteen group members. The current stop controls on several private driveways should be removed. These are contrary to standard engineering practice, and will become unnecessary once sight distances are improved. The existing traffic signal at Ballinger Way NE will be relocated and new signs will be installed informing cyclists to follow the pedestrian light signal. The existing traffic signal at 170th will be relocated, and appropriate signs will be provided for cyclists regarding traffic signals. The trail stop signs at NE 165th will be removed, but vehicular stop signs will remain although one will be moved west of the trail. Vehicles will continue to stop at this intersection. As appropriate, new intersection warning, yield, distance-warning, and other signage that is in compliance with standard engineering practices will be installed.
- Eleven out of the thirteen Citizens Advisory Group members agree that the King County land included in the trail and its right-of-way must remain under public ownership, and that the land must be fully available to the County to accommodate necessary improvements, including buffering and mitigation measures.

Areas in Need of Further Discussion

Trail Widening and Sight Distance. In principle, the eleven-member CAG majority agree that the trail should be widened and sight distances improved. The specific strategies for how these improvements should be made, however, need more analysis and discussion -- not only with CAG members, but with trail users and adjacent homeowners.

For example, eleven members of the group agree with the Atelier recommendation that the trail be widened to twelve feet, with three-foot shoulders on each side surfaced with a crushed rock material. It should be noted that the newly-widened twelve-foot trail will be fully available to all users: cyclists, pedestrians, and others. Further, the increased shoulder width on either side will make it easier for pedestrians to move aside and use those areas when cyclists appear on the trail. Dean Peterson is opposed to this level of widening, expressing the concern that this will make it easier for cyclists to speed on the trail, and may force pedestrian users into a relatively confined area.

Many members of the group are keenly interested in reviewing a larger set of possible options for trail widening. While several of the Atelier recommendations call for trail widening to the west, other recommendations suggest widening to the east, which is likely to result in further impacts and complications for a number of trailside homeowners. While some members of the group agree with all of the trail widening recommendations in the Atelier report, others feel that this is a design question that deserves more exploration and discussion with the MacLeod Reckord team. Widening to the west is the clear preferred alternative for several members, especially those who are homeowners adjoining the trail. These members want to make certain that all possible options in this regard are thoroughly explored.

Further, the group believes that it is essential to engage the affected homeowners directly in this decision. The public involvement program integrated with the design effort calls for these discussions and creates opportunities for these homeowners to work directly with the design team on possible compromise solutions. Similar to drainage improvements, however, CAG members recognize that design mitigation for adjacent property owners cannot be made *at any cost*. While impacts to trailside property owners will be minimized as much as possible, the Burke Gilman Trail is an amenity for a broad diversity of regional users. Any mitigation made for residential property owners must fit within reasonable cost parameters.

Design alternatives for NE 151st Street. The possible consolidation of the three driveways at NE 151st Street is another Atelier recommendation that is in need of continued discussion. A few members of the group are firmly opposed to this idea. One question that has been raised is whether or not driveway consolidation here is truly necessary, with the observation that this is a crossing that is only used a few times per day. The Atelier plan calls for a massive bulkhead to be constructed in the King County right-of-way with a severe impact to a homeowner. Group members who are opposed to this design alternative insist that “there has to be a better way”, and are optimistic that the continued discussion with MacLeod Reckord will result in a design solution that is more compatible with neighboring uses along this section of the trail.

Automated Traffic Lights. A suggestion has been made by the City of Lake Forest Park that an automated traffic light system be installed. Opinions vary widely as to whether this would serve to enhance trail safety or if it would, indeed, serve as a liability to trail safety. Group members are in strong agreement that any such system should not be installed until trail widening, signage, and other improvements are implemented.

However, the CAG is also open to discussion on this issue. Members are curious to know what engineering experts throughout the country have to say about such a system, and hope to engage in that conversation with MacLeod Reckord.

Other Design Questions. Behavior modification, including cyclist speed, where people walk, and the number of pedestrians or cyclists who travel abreast of one another, is an area of interest and concern for the CAG. While some of these issues clearly go beyond the scope of “design”, members are curious as to how design can influence certain behaviors. If you build to improve sight distances, for example, does that automatically mean that cyclists will go faster? How can design encourage slower speeds, or groups of only two pedestrians traveling side-by-side? Members are interested in continuing this discussion.

What about the addition of more places to pull off, stop, drink water, and rest? More places where groups of users can move aside, get out of the way? Could the design team consider these additions? One such area has been recommended in the Trail Development Study; are more warranted?

Would striping in the middle of the trail be a wise addition? Striping at the shoulders?

Maintenance and Enforcement of Trail Usage Rules. The Citizens Advisory Group believes that maintenance of the trail is of paramount importance. Drainage, pavement, widening, and other improvements are worthless if the trail is not consistently maintained on a regular basis. It is the strong and fervent hope of the CAG that King County will ensure that its maintenance program is adequate to keep the trail at its safest operating level. Group members anticipate that they will have the opportunity to discuss their concerns and suggestions related to this issue directly with King County staff.

Enforcement of existing regulations, as well as signage that encourages wise and courteous trail use, need to be improved and strengthened along this trail segment. Committee members have made numerous suggestions in this regard; one is to simply enforce the existing King County/Lake Forest Park ordinances related to trail speeds. Another is to post the trail at 15 mph, with enforcement to begin at 20 mph. Still other suggestions include the requirement that users wear rear and front lighting after dark; both bicycles and pedestrians should be no more than two abreast. Group members anticipate that they will have the opportunity to discuss their concerns and suggestions related to this issue directly with King County and Lake Forest Park staff.

SUMMARY

The Citizens Advisory Group worked diligently throughout 2005 to learn about, review, and comment on the myriad of issues associated with safety and other trail improvements along this two-mile stretch of the Burke Gilman Trail through Lake Forest Park. Group members came to the table with a broad diversity of opinions and perspectives, and debates were often vigorous. As noted in this report, while there continue to be a few


areas of divided opinion, the group has managed to achieve a significant level of consensus on many of the recommendations included in the preliminary design report. And, where opinions are split, most of those who oppose an Atelier recommendation are really asking for continued discussion of the issues, rather than insisting that they will firmly oppose any modifications to the trail.

Citizen Advisory Group members are committed to maintaining the positive group dynamics and constructive meeting sessions that have evolved during the past fifteen months. They will continue to be substantively engaged in design options throughout 2006, as possible solutions continue to be explored with the MacLeod Reckord team.

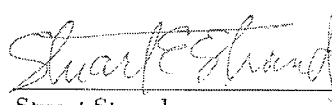
The Burke Gilman Citizens Advisory Group respectfully submits the attached report. Dean Peterson asked that his name be removed from this signature page. Tom French was out of town at the time of signature.

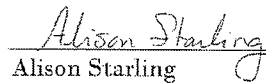

Tim Ahern



Kate Comtois

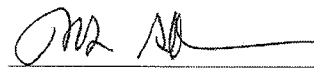

Jon Skamser


Sandy Koppenol

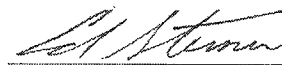

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